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SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS

ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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The following resolution was adopted without a vote by the 93rd Inter-Parliamentary Conference 1/ (Madrid, 27 March-1 April 1995):

Parliamentary action for women's access to and participation in decision-making structures aimed at achieving true equality for women

The 93rd Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Considering that, at its 154th session, in March 1994, the Inter-Parliamentary Council unanimously adopted a Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life,

Noting that the Plan of Action includes measures to promote women's equal participation in and equal access to education, health, employment and economic life as a prerequisite for their equal participation in political life and decision-making,

Recognizing that the question of equality is a question of democracy which affects the whole of humanity,

Affirming the need to build on and implement the principles of equality already laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation, and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action agreed at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993),

Recognizing that continuing action by all States and parliaments in particular is needed to promote these principles, and that supportive national legislation plays a key role in improving women's status, regardless of the economic situation of countries,

Also recognizing the paramount role of public education and awareness-raising in promoting equality and partnership between men and women in society, and realizing further that education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous, environmentally sound and egalitarian world, while at the same time contributing to social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation,

Acknowledging that the imbalance in the participation of men and women in political life and in decision-making structures reflects and is reflected in women's lower socio-economic and cultural status,

Noting that the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995) has as its critical areas of concern:

(a) Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;

(b) Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;

(c) Lack of awareness of, and commitment to, internationally and nationally recognized women's human rights;

(d) The persistent and growing burden of poverty on women;

(e) Inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself;

(f) Inequality in access to education;

(g) Inequalities in health and access to appropriate health care;

(h) Violence against women;

(i) Effects of armed and other kinds of conflict on women;

(j) Insufficient use of mass media to promote women's positive contributions to society;

(k) Lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to managing natural resources and safeguarding the environment,

Aware that States will wish at the Fourth World Conference on Women to report progress on the Inter-Parliamentary Union Plan of Action to correct imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, as well as progress on the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women agreed at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi, 1985),

1. Urges all States to make the Fourth World Conference on Women a Conference of commitments, by pledging firm commitments of action in Beijing;

2. Also urges parliamentarians to keep informed of conventions on the rights of women and make them known to all local, regional or national bodies; to monitor the status of these conventions at the national and international levels; and to urge their States, if they have not yet done so, to ratify the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);

3. Calls on parliamentarians to play a more active role, along with Governments and the various parties concerned, to get States which have expressed reservations to re-examine them with a view to lifting them as rapidly as possible;

4. Also calls on all Governments and parliaments to take account of the human rights of women and equality in national legislation and all action on human rights, and to integrate them into strategies for progress in employment, education, health and other areas of human development;

5. Urges all States to implement regional and national instruments enshrining the equality of men and women;

6. Also urges all parliaments to ensure balanced and equitable distribution of national resources and the benefits of development programmes, taking into account the needs and aspirations of women;

7. Recommends that all parliaments monitor progress towards the goal of equal participation by men and women in decision-making in all sectors and in political structures at all levels;

8. Encourages all Governments to promote responsible partnership between men and women with the family and, at the same time, urges parliaments to formulate laws which facilitate shared responsibility in this respect;

9. Urges political parties to endorse and implement the Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, and encourages other organizations to adopt this course of action;

10. Also urges parliaments to endorse the Plan of Action and to report annually to the Inter-Parliamentary Union on measures taken to implement the Plan, the first such annual report to be submitted in advance of the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

Notes

1/ On 1 June 1995, the Inter-Parliamentary Union was composed of the following 135 national parliaments and 3 associate members: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Andean Parliament, Latin American Parliament and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.